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665 [195] and formed the Workers' Party, or 'Kaawer-Socialist' group, secured six seats. In 1930 this group was dissolved and its seats distributed among the other parties, while the Communist party had already been declared illegal after a *putsch* engineered from Moscow in December 1924. The solidarity of the nation against Communism was illustrated by the energetic suppression of this *putsch* by General Laidoner, and the formation of a grand coalition of all the major parties, including the Social-Democrats, under Dr. Jaakson. Martial law, which had been proclaimed throughout the country, was thereafter retained permanently in certain frontier zones and on all railways; and, although during the following years plots were from time to time discovered, Communism never again got out of hand to the extent of being a national danger.

642 *Constitutional Reform.* As early as 1924 the question of constitutional revision was raised by Dr. Jaakson in his Ministerial Declaration immediately after the Communist *putsch*, when he suggested the desirability of separating the functions of the President of the State from those of the Prime Minister. Bills to that effect were unsuccessfully introduced in the Assembly by the parties of the Right in February 1925 and July 1926, while the Labour party tabled a [666] separate Bill in 1926 for halving the number of deputies in the Assembly; in the same year the Assembly actually adopted a modification of the electoral law, requiring a deposit from every candidate and a minimum of two successful candidates for representation of any group in the Assembly.

668 642 The year 1930 saw the genesis of a speedily repressed peasant 'Lapuan' movement in South Estonia, somewhat on the lines of its Finnish prototype, but without the latter's anti-Communist character. This organization expressed its dissatisfaction with parliamentary 'absolutism', talked of a march on Tallinn, and proposed to petition for the reduction of the number of deputies and the diminution of their salaries. A far more important movement was set on foot in March 1931 by the Ex-service Men's Federation, which passed a resolution demanding the institution of a President of the State with extensive powers, an electoral system which allowed for votes for individuals instead of for lists, and the reduction of the number of deputies, with the threat that, if the Government did not accede to these requests within three months, the Federation would proceed to a popular referendum.

578 642 There now began a three-cornered struggle between the Agrarian and Centre parliamentary groups, which favoured moderate reform; the Ex-servicemen—henceforth known as the 'Liberators'—who demanded far wider powers for the President of State than the former were willing to concede; and the Social-Democrats, who were opposed

support of the Army and of the President, he was obliged to resign his post on September 19, and, although he subsequently made several attempts to seize the reins again,[1] he never succeeded in doing so.

The Tubelis Administration, 1929–1938. President Smetona now invited his brother-in-law, M. Tubelis, to form a Cabinet which, with certain alterations, has remained in office to this day; M. Zaunius became Foreign Minister, while M. Rusteika retained the post of Minister of the Interior which he had held under M. Voldemaras. For a time the prospects of a return to normal political life seemed brighter. Political prisoners were released and dismissed officials reinstated; party leaders who had gone into voluntary rustication returned to the capital; in December 1929 even the ban on the Social-Democratic party was raised, although the press censorship was strictly maintained. The first provincial and municipal elections since the *coup* were held in June 1931,[2] and on December 11 an electoral college, chosen by district assemblies of the new local government bodies, met to re-elect M. Smetona as President for a term of seven years.

Opposition to the Tubelis Government steadily accumulated, however, on all sides. The persecution of the Social-Democrats continued, and by 1932 the last of the trade unions was dissolved; there was also friction, from 1931 onwards, between the Government on the one hand, and the Christian-Democrats, morally supported by the Vatican, on the other;[3] and in November 1935 both the Christian-Democratic and the Populist parties were dissolved by a decree which was confirmed and extended to all Opposition parties in February 1936. The unsuccessful attempts to stage the return of M. Voldemaras, made by small groups of officers in June 1934[4] and in January 1936, bore witness to a certain amount of disaffection in the Army. More serious were the peasant strikes which broke out in the Suvalki district in August 1935 and the spring of 1936, and the workers' demonstration and strike in Kaunas in June 1936, when the troops had to be called out, and a state of siege was proclaimed in the city. The reshuffle of the Cabinet in September 1936, when new appoint-

[1] In consequence of a series of intrigues he was banished to the country in July 1930, and the 'Iron Wolf' was dissolved in the following August. He was tried and acquitted on a charge of conspiracy in August 1931, and on a charge of misappropriation of funds in September 1932. After the failure of a *putsch*, organized by certain Army officers in June 1934, owing to the loyalty of the majority of the Army and to President Smetona's refusal to negotiate with the insurgents, M. Voldemaras was sentenced by court martial to twelve years' penal servitude on charges of high treason and of accepting assistance from a foreign Power (i.e. Germany). In February 1938 he was granted an amnesty, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Lithuania's independence.

[2] They were boycotted by the Opposition parties, however, on account of certain restrictions on the franchise.

[3] See above, p. 40.

[4] See footnote above.

645 The reshuffle of the Cabinet in September 1936, when new appointments were made to the Ministries of Agriculture and of the Interior, was presumably the direct result of these disturbances, although M. Tubelis repudiated any connexion between the two circumstances.

● 666 As early as December 1933, President Smetona had foreshadowed the institution of a non-party parliament elected on a corporative basis, but—owing, probably, to the peasant disturbances—the elections to the new *Seimas*, which had been fixed for September 1935, were postponed until June 1936. A new Electoral Law was then published providing for the nomination of candidates by the district and municipal councils instead of by the parties (except in the case of Memel), reducing the number of deputies to forty-nine, and ordaining that votes should be cast for individuals instead of lists. Two seats were allotted to the Jewish minority,[1] and one to the Poles, but none to the German or Russian minorities. Out of a total electorate of 1,136,067, 775,951 (i.e. 68 per cent.) went to the polls; the majority of the deputies returned were either landowners or agricultural experts.

642 663 After nearly ten years of non-parliamentary administration, President Smetona summoned the *Seimas* on September 1, 1936, and stated that its task would be to prepare a draft reform of the 1928 Constitution, which was due to expire in 1938, on a corporative and nationalist basis. Meanwhile, the Nationalist party itself had already undergone a reorganization on Nazi lines in 1933, with the substitution of the *Führer* principle for the elective system, and the proclamation of M. Smetona as its supreme head; while, in 1935, it was decided to unite in a common front all the existing patriotic organizations, including the non-political Lithuanian Militia.

642 Finally, in February 1938, the twentieth anniversary of the proclamation of Lithuania's independence was celebrated by the issue of an amnesty to numerous political prisoners (including M. Voldemaras), and by the *Seimas*'s adoption of a new constitution. Although the latter was promulgated on May 12, at the time of writing details of its provisions were not available. It was understood, however, to provide for a single Chamber Diet elected for five years by universal, secret, equal, and direct suffrage,[2] and for a Head of the State with wide powers elected for a seven-year term by delegates of the nation. Vilna was once more declared to be the capital of Lithuania.

The crisis of the following March, when Lithuania was obliged to yield to the Polish ultimatum of the 17th, demanding the renewal

[1] The Jewish candidates failed to obtain the requisite minimum of votes.

[2] Rules relating to the presentation of candidates, however, were to be determined by a special law.

Neumann and other leaders of the *Sovog*. This action called forth a German Note of protest, and the suspension of all local goods traffic across the frontier.[1] 361 648 661 648 [643]

In June Dr. Schreiber was dismissed on a charge of encouraging the Nazi movement, and was replaced at first by Dr. Reizgys, and later by M. Bruvelaitis, both of whom were Memellanders and appointed purely Lithuanian Directorates. The authorities now pursued the policy of reducing the Diet to impotence, firstly by disqualifying members of the Diet who belonged to 'seditious organisations',[2] and secondly by arranging that all the Lithuanian deputies should absent themselves, so that, on the rare occasions when the Diet met, a quorum was not present. In December the trial of 122 Nazis began in Kaunas, on charges of conspiracy for the reunion of Memel with Germany through armed revolt. Four prisoners were also accused of the murder of an official named Jesuttis, who was alleged to have betrayed Nazi plans to the Lithuanian authorities. Undeterred by indirect German pressure exerted through the reinforcement of troops on the frontier, or by representations made by the Guarantor Powers, the Court delivered heavy sentences in March 1935, including four death sentences on the murder charge.[3]

As a result of an appeal made by Herr Hitler during the visit of Sir John Simon and Mr. Eden to Berlin in March, a joint Note was addressed to Lithuania by Great Britain, France, and Italy on April 19, 1935,[4] urging an early meeting of the Diet, and the constitution of a Directorate possessing its confidence; the Lithuanian reply was unsatisfactory, but, in the meantime, M. Novakas had been succeeded as Governor by the more moderate M. Kurkauskas, and the German parties had been invited to collaborate in the reconstitution of the Directorate. Shortly after their refusal to do so, the three-year term of the Diet expired, on May 4, and new elections were not held until September. In the meantime the electoral law was amended in such a way as to deprive several candidates (including Dr. Schreiber) of the now united front of pro-German parties, known as the *Einheitsliste*,[5] of their electoral rights and Lithuanian citizen- 648 361 666

[1] Even the transit through Germany of goods destined for Lithuania was later prohibited.

[2] The non-Nazi, but German, *Landwirtschaftspartei* was now included in this category.

[3] These were later commuted to life imprisonment.

[4] In July 1934 the Powers had, in reply to a German Note complaining of the situation, adopted the line that complaints should be addressed to the League Council; and, although a committee of jurists appointed by the Council to consider two petitions presented by the Vice-President of the Diet in the following September had pronounced that infringements of the Statute had taken place, the matter had not been brought up for further discussion by the Council—owing, perhaps, to the pre-occupation of the Powers with the Saar Plebiscite.

[5] The *Einheitsliste* included all the German parties except the Social-Democrats, as well as a number of Lithuanians. It aimed ostensibly at the maintenance of the autonomous régime, but was supported by vigorous propaganda from the German Reich.

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ship, and to disenfranchise a large number of voters. Influenced, however, by Herr Hitler's bitter denunciations in the Reichstag on September 15, and by a further *démarche* of the three Powers on the 12th, the Lithuanian Government at last agreed to make certain concessions with regard to the German parties and to the conduct of the elections, which were watched by the British *Chargé d'affaires* at Kaunas, and were on the whole fairly conducted. The net result of all these efforts was the election of twenty-four candidates of the *Einheitsliste* and five Lithuanians; thus the latter failed to gain a single seat.

The usual post-election period of appeasement ensued; for—after the failure of two attempts to form a Directorate under a Lithuanian President—M. Baldžius, a Lithuanian Memellander and a member of the *Einheitsliste*, was appointed President.[1] The new Directorate, which received a vote of confidence from the Diet in December, repealed a number of anti-Nazi measures and began the reinstatement of officials who had been dismissed on political grounds. During 1936, moreover, there was a marked improvement in German-Lithuanian relations, beginning with a Lithuanian request for British mediation at the end of 1935, and continuing with a *rapprochement* initiated by Germany with startling suddenness in the spring of 1936;[2] and economic conditions in Memel were considerably benefited by a frontier traffic agreement concluded between the two countries in the following August. In October M. Kurkauskas resigned and was replaced by M. Kubilius, a Lithuanian lawyer who had hitherto played little part in political life. Although there were fresh arrests and trials of Nazis during 1936–7, on the other hand a large number of amnesties were granted,[3] and in February 1937 the British Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs was able to inform the House of Commons that 'the political position in the Memel territory is now generally satisfactory'.[4]

Note on the Economic Position of Memel

The economic prosperity of the Memel Territory is now entirely dependent upon that of Lithuania. This is primarily due to the fact

[1] In January 1936 M. Baldžius was replaced by M. Diomons, also a member of the *Einheitsliste*.

[2] See above, p. 88.

[3] Most of the National-Socialists imprisoned have now been released, including Pastor von Sass (in 1937) and Dr. Neumann (in 1938).

[4] Unfortunately, however, a fresh occasion for agitation was provided by the Kaunas Government's law of September 6, 1937, expropriating, against compensation, some 440 hectares of territory belonging to 24 German landowners, for military purposes and harbour development. A violent campaign ensued in the German press; and on September 25 M. Baldžius informed the Memel Diet that the Directorate had protested to the Governor against the law on the ground that the expropriation of property was exclusively the concern of the Memel authorities, and had declined to co-operate in its execution. The German Government themselves (although, not being signatories of the Convention, they had no

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to grant them. (The press of all three countries consecrated much space, at the time, to articles proclaiming lasting, unshakeable friendship for the kind and powerful neighbor to the East.) In June 1940, on the pretext that Soviet soldiers stationed in these bases had not been assured proper security, the Red Army crossed the borders of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia; the NKVD moved into power, and all former state machinery ceased to exist.

My account of the Baltic states is not derived from books or manuscripts. The first sunlight I saw, my first smell of the earth, my first tree, were the sunlight, smell, and tree of these regions; for I was born there, of Polish-speaking parents, beside a river that bore a Lithuanian name. I am familiar with the events of the past years not from the dry notes of historians; they are as vivid for me as the faces and eyes of people one knows well.

The invasion of the Spanish must have been an appalling experience for the Aztecs. The customs of the conquerors were incomprehensible; their religious ceremonies, strange; the paths of their thought, impossible to follow. The invasion of the Red Army was no less of a shock for the Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians. Of course, the older people remembered the days of the Tsars; yet this was completely different, and much worse. In the years that had elapsed since the fall of Tsarism, Russia had not evolved closer toward Europe but further away, toward principles of social organization Europe had never before known. The thinking and reactions of these conquerors were just as alien to the conquered as the arcanum of Catholic theology and the Castilian concept of honor had been to the Aztecs.

New general elections were ordered immediately. But these elections had nothing in common with the elections held before then. There was a single list of candidates,

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666 208 626 presented by the new authorities. Why, then, were the cities and countryside covered with propaganda leaflets and handbills; why did megaphones shout day and night; why the trucks decorated with huge portraits of the candidates; why the garlands, the meetings, and the platforms? Why the propaganda if one had no choice? No one could understand. Yet on election day everyone flocked to the polls. They had to vote; for when one turned in one's ballot, one's passport was stamped. The absence of this stamp meant that the owner of the passport was an enemy of the people who had revealed his ill will by refusing to vote. Some people, naïvely, handed in torn or crossed-out ballots; but they were declared valid and affirmative. The final tallies were impressive. The first act of the parliaments thus elected was to make a formal request for incorporation into the Soviet Union. That favor was granted.

000 One of the new delegates to the Lithuanian parliament was a friend from my early youth. Together we had traveled many kilometers down various European rivers in a canoe, escaped drowning in rapids, wandered over mountain trails, seen the sun rise over the valleys of the Black Forest and the castles of the Rhineland. A few years before the Second World War he became a Stalinist. He was from Warsaw, and his presence in Lithuania at the outbreak of the war was more or less accidental. Nevertheless, he was proposed as a candidate (there were so few Communists in these countries that every one was put to use); and since candidacy was tantamount to election, he became a delegate. It must have been quite an experience of power for him; he could vote the incorporation of a country he had nothing to do with into another country which he knew only from its propaganda literature and official statistics. At the time, that was something new; but other innovations were to come. All over Eastern Europe,